

Claims

1. A method of providing specific usage related information directly to a computer user, the method comprising:

providing a dedicated user interface for internet usage by a computer user;

monitoring the internet usage by the computer user through the dedicated user interface;

identifying specific information relevant to the internet usage by the computer user;

modifying the dedicated user interface dependent on the internet usage by the user, to provide access to the identified information.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein, on a user accessing an internet site, the identified information includes information relating to at least one other internet site, from at least one menu defined by another user.
3. A method as claimed in claim 2 wherein the or each menu is selected as a source of the identified information because the or each selected menu also includes information related to the accessed internet site.
4. A method as claimed in claim 2 or 3 wherein the accessed internet site contains at least one link to a further linked internet site, and the or each menu is selected as a source of the identified information because the or each selected menu also includes information related to the or at least one linked internet site.
5. A method as claimed in claim 2, 3, or 4 wherein the other user has a usage history and the or each defined menu is selected as a source of the identified information because the usage history indicates that the other user has visited either the accessed site or a site linked from it.

6. A method as claimed in any preceding claim wherein details of historical internet usage by several computer users are stored in usage histories, including details relating to the information sources accessed by the computer users;

the usage histories are analysed to determine the most commonly accessed sources of information;

each of the most commonly accessed sources of information, for all users, is allocated to at least one topic; and

the usage history of each computer user is analysed to identify which computer users have expressed an interest in the or each topic;

wherein,

the identified information includes information relating to any topic in which the computer user has expressed an interest.

7. A method as claimed in claim 6 wherein the usage histories are analysed to determine the most commonly accessed topics and related resources are associated with the most commonly accessed topics;

wherein,

the identified information further includes the related resources associated with any topic in which the computer user has expressed an interest.

8. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which access to at least some of the identified information is provided via a hierarchical menu.

9. An apparatus for providing specific usage related information directly to a computer user, the method comprising:

means for providing a dedicated user interface for internet usage by a computer user;

means for monitoring the internet usage by the computer user through the dedicated user interface;

means for identifying specific information relevant to the internet usage by the computer user;

means for modifying the dedicated user interface dependent on the internet usage by the user, to provide access to the identified information.

10. An apparatus as claimed in claim 9 wherein, on a user accessing an internet site, the identified information includes information relating to at least one other internet site, from at least one menu defined by another user.
11. An apparatus as claimed in claim 10 wherein the or each menu is selected as a source of the identified information because the or each selected menu also includes information related to the accessed internet site.
12. An apparatus as claimed in claim 10 or 11 wherein the accessed internet site contains at least one link to a further linked internet site, and the or each menu is selected as a source of the identified information because the or each selected menu also includes information related to the or at least one linked internet site.
13. An apparatus as claimed in claim 10, 11, or 12 wherein the other user has a usage history and the or each defined menu is selected as a source of the identified information because the usage history indicates that the other user has visited either the accessed site or a site linked from it.
14. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim wherein details of historical internet usage by several computer users are stored in usage histories, including details relating to the information sources accessed by the computer users;

the usage histories are analysed to determine the most commonly accessed sources of information;

each of the most commonly accessed sources of information, for all users, is allocated to at least one topic; and

the usage history of each computer user is analysed to identify which computer users have expressed an interest in the or each topic;

wherein,

the identified information includes information relating to any topic in which the computer user has expressed an interest.

15. An apparatus as claimed in claim 14 wherein the usage histories are analysed to determine the most commonly accessed topics and related resources are associated with the most commonly accessed topics;

wherein,

the identified information further includes the related resources associated with any topic in which the computer user has expressed an interest.

16. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim in which access to at least some of the identified information is provided via a hierarchical menu.